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ABSTRACT

The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 changed the federal government's relationship to education. Previously, while the federal government had provided land grants for schools and aid to vocational education, it had been unwilling to fund general education. The Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1957, however, allowed supporters to link educational aid to national defense and led to the passage of the NDEA the following year. Title VIII of the NDEA changed certain criteria for aid to vocational education and funded a great expansion in vocational education programs. The general education aid envisioned in other NDEA titles originally was focused on gifted students and the sciences, mathematics, and foreign languages. NDEA's scope has since broadened to include the arts and humanities and nearly all students. A title-by-title review of NDEA changes since 1958 reveals expansions in higher education loans and fellowships, growth of aid for teacher training and instructional improvement, and increases in funds for high school student counseling, language study, and state collection of educational statistics. (Author/RW)

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THE NATIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION ACT:
A TURNING POINT IN FEDERAL AID

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I.

NDEA: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

From the beginning of our country the role of the federal government in education has never been clear. Even though education began as a local responsibility and concern, and became a state responsibility, the federal government has provided support for education almost since the birth of the nation. Even before the adoption of the Constitution, the Continental Congress passed two Ordinances which provided general types of aid to education. The Survey Ordinance of 1785 reserved section sixteen in every township to be used for the endowment of schools within the township. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 stated that "schools and means for education shall forever be encouraged."¹

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

This is part of the Bill of Rights, the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The Bill of Rights is a product of the first session of the First Congress; it became effective

¹Johns, Roe L., et. al., Status and Impact of Educational Finance Programs, National Educational Finance Project, Gainesville, Fla., 1971, pp. 224-225.

December 15, 1791. By implication, the Tenth Amendment leaves education, and its support, mainly a concern of the States even though the Federal government has made numerous expenditures for education. In some cases it has become directly involved.²

Schools in Washington D.C. have been the responsibility of the Congress since 1804. In 1824 the Bureau of Indian Affairs began providing schools for Indians and natives of Alaska. The federal government has also established and operated schools in foreign countries where it maintains consulates, arsenals, dockyards and other defense-related establishments.³

Congress passed the Morrill Act of 1862 to create federally supported land-grant colleges. But many bills in support of education have been proposed and defeated in Congress since then. Some of these failed due to fear of federal control of schools, others were defeated to protect the separation of church and state. Still others were voted down over disagreements about how to distribute funds, or because of the integration issue.⁴

Congress has, however, passed a number of Acts which provide federal funds for public education. Prior to the 1950's this kind of support was mainly concerned with vocational education.

²DeYoung, Chris A., and Richard Wynn, American Education, 7th ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, 1972, p. 431.

³Henderson, George, Introduction to American Education: A Human Relations Approach, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1978, p. 83.

⁴Cohen, Wilbur J., "NDEA: An Idea That Grew," American Education, Vol. 4, Number 4, September 1968, p. 2.

The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 gave vocational education its first real impetus through support for agriculture, trade and industrial education, and home economics.

The George-Deen Act of 1936 was approved to replace the George-Ellzey Act of 1934, which was to expire in 1937. This new act was a continuing act with no expiration date. It also supported agriculture, home economics, and trade and industrial education.

The George-Barden Act of 1946 replaced the George-Deen Act and authorized more money for vocational education.

As previously stated, several bills were defeated which, if passed, would have provided funds for general education. Due to the defeat of the "general education" bills, congressmen tried a different approach to strengthen the educational system. The National Science Foundation of 1950, the Cooperative Research Act in 1954, and other pieces of legislation were passed in the name of something other than "the strengthening of education."

Education did not necessarily carry negative connotations; but federal support for it was not politically popular. Improvement of education was not yet considered to be a worthy national goal.⁵

Even though education bills were being defeated, people were recognizing that the strength of the United States was dependent upon a healthy educational system. The Senate Preparedness Investigation Subcommittee, in 1955, recognized the need for American schools to be ready to meet challenges created in a period of expanding Soviet

⁵Ibid.

development. However, efforts to fund schools still failed.

Then, on October 4, 1957 the Soviet Union successfully launched an unmanned satellite named Sputnik.

II.

NDEA: PASSAGE

America was shocked! The launching of the world's first man-made satellite by the Russians caused great alarm because it was commonly thought that the Russians could not possibly develop science and industry under their socialist system.

The immediate reaction of many people to the Russian success was to blame the American schools and their alleged inefficiency. This state of public opinion fortunately did not prevail and the country gave attention to the contribution that education should make to the physical security of the nation and to space exploration. Arguments were made for a hard, no frills curriculum which would give attention to the gifted learner, and that it was time to emphasize rigorous study of essential subjects. Emphasis was to be on subject-centered curricula at all levels of education.⁶

Senator Lister Hill and Representative Carl Elliott, both of Alabama, took the initiative in formulating a proposal to Congress that would provide schools with the needed money to implement the changes which were to take place in American education.

Realizing that they had little chance for selling Congress on a

⁶Johns, Roe L. and Edgar Morphet, The Economics and Financing of Education: A Systems Approach, 3rd ed., Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1975, p. 372.

traditional type of federal aid bill, the Congressmen created the formula that culminated in success. They related education to national defense. The time was right; the nation had been stunned by Sputnik; President Eisenhower had addressed Congress with educational recommendations calling for emphasis on our national security requirements. Then, in 1958, Congress enacted the National Defense Education Act, commonly known by its acronym, NDEA.

The National Defense Education Act of 1958

AN ACT

To strengthen the national defense and to encourage and assist in the expansion and improvement of educational programs to meet critical national needs; and for other purposes.⁷

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this act, divided into titles and sections according to the following table of contents, (deleted) may be cited as the "National Defense Education Act of 1958."⁸

So begins the legislation which provided expenditure of substantial sums aimed at stimulating and strengthening education in science, foreign languages and mathematics. It consisted of ten titles.

⁷U.S. Statutes at Large. 85th Congress, 2nd session, Volume 72, Part 1, Public Laws and Reorganization Plan, 1958, Title 20, p. 1580.

⁸Ibid.

Below is the listing of these titles to provide a basis to perceive the scope of the act.⁹

- I. General Provisions-Purpose and Definition.
- II. Loans to Students in Higher Education.
- III. Financial Assistance for Strengthening Science, Mathematics, and Modern Foreign Language Instruction.
- IV. National Defense Fellowships.
- V. Guidance, Counseling, and Testing; Identification and Encouragement of Able Students; Counseling and Guidance Training.
- VI. Language Development Centers for Research and Studies; Language Institutes.
- VII. Research and Experimentation In More Effective Utilization of Television, Radio, Motion Pictures, and Related Media For Educational Purposes.
- VIII. Area Vocational Education Programs.
- IX. Science Information Service.
- X. Improvement of Statistical Services of State Educational Agencies.

⁹Ibid.

III.

NDEA: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Of particular interest to those in the area of vocational education is Title VIII, "Area Vocational Programs." This part of NDEA authorized an appropriation of \$15 million annually for three years to support programs limited exclusively to the training of highly skilled technicians in recognized occupations necessary to the national defense.

Title VII-Area Vocational Educational Programs-Statement of Findings and Purpose states the following:¹⁰

Sec. 801. The Congress hereby finds that the excellent programs of vocational education, which States have established and are carrying on with the assistance provided by the Federal Government under the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act and the Vocational Education Act of 1946 (the George-Barden Act), need extension to provide vocational education to residents of areas inadequately served and also to meet national defense requirements for personnel equipped to render skilled assistance in fields particularly affected by scientific and technological developments. It is therefore the purpose of this title to provide assistance to the States so that they may improve their vocational education programs through area vocational education programs approved by State boards of vocational education as providing vocational and related technical training and retraining for youths, adults, and older persons, including related instruction for apprentices, designed to fit them for useful employment as technicians or skilled workers in scientific or technical fields.

¹⁰Ibid.

The provisions of Title VII, NDEA, were amended to the George-Barden Act of 1946 and became Title III of that act.

New programs basically followed patterns established under the George-Barden Act. It was necessary, however, to emphasize and realign certain basic criteria. These were identified by HEW, Office of Education in "Area Vocational Education Programs" in 1959, as follows.

- For persons being trained there must be an employment market.
- Analysis of occupations or family of occupations must determine course content.
- Appropriate general education backgrounds are required of students, or appropriate general and scientific education must be in their total curriculum.
- The length and technical content of the program must be appropriate for the students.
- Appropriate facilities must be available.
- Instructors and supervisors must be adequately prepared and experienced.
- There must be an appropriate student selection program.¹¹

Also stipulated was that programs under this Act were not to be limited to a certain school district. Recruitment to the Area Vocational Education Programs would be enhanced if larger areas were considered.

¹¹Barlow, Melvin L., History of Industrial Education in the United States, Chas. A. Bennett Co., Peoria Illinois, 1967, p. 412.

Comprehensive programs also would be possible under this arrangement.¹²

The NDEA brought about an increase in the number of vocational education programs and the expansion of programs established prior to World War II. This boon was not restricted to secondary schools; it was also seen in post-secondary schools and extension programs.

The quick growth of vocational education in terms of enrollment during the first five years of the NDEA is shown in this chart.¹³

	Preparatory Program	Extension Program	Total
1958-59	19,243	29,321	48,564
1959-60	32,937	68,342	101,279
1960-61	39,224	83,728	122,952
1961-62	53,071	95,849	148,920
1962-63	75,888	108,707	184,595

"More impressive than the statistics concerning the growth of enrollment was the action reported in nearly all of the states to improve their ability to educate the technicians. Some states more than doubled the number of schools."¹⁴

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid. p. 416.

¹⁴Ibid.

IV.

NDEA: GENERAL EDUCATION

The original National Defense Education Act programs were restricted to specific categories of assistance which affected all levels of education from elementary through graduate school.

This act was largely aimed at providing for the special needs of gifted students. For the most gifted high school, college-bound students, Title V-A provided guidance and counseling programs. Title II provided financial aid to college students with superior academic backgrounds who expressed a desire to teach in elementary or secondary schools or who showed promise in science, mathematics or foreign languages. NDEA aimed to strengthen programs which were related to national defense. Title III was for science, mathematics and foreign languages. Title VII, again, was for highly skilled technical trades. These areas, however, concerned only a small part of the school curriculum.¹⁵

Gradually legislators and school officials realized that national interest in education was not divisible in this way. "There could be no true excellence with good programs in science and engineering and shoddy instruction in arts and humanities, with encouragement of

¹⁵Cohen, Wilbur J., "NDEA: An Idea That Grew," American Education, Volume 4, Number 4, September 1968, p. 3.

the academically gifted and neglect of the majority." Thus financial support of education increased sharply beyond the original legislation. The NDEA, particularly under the Johnson administration, became more and more an all-purpose act.¹⁶

An important facet of the NDEA has been Title II, the National Defense Student Loan Program. This program has provided a means for many thousands of students to receive undergraduate and graduate degrees.

¹⁶Ibid.

V.

NDEA: SINCE 1958

There have been many extensions, amendments, and increases in allocations to the NDEA since its inception in 1958. The following changes have been made in the NDEA.

Title II

Title II has been expanded to serve larger numbers of students with student loans. It is no longer required to sign an affidavit stating that one is not a communist (1960). Criteria for student loans have also changed; career intent or superior grades no longer are factors. In 1970 Title II was amended to forgive repayment (in part or in full) of federal college loans for those who would teach in underprivileged areas. Instruction in schools has hence been strengthened by the qualified people who, had it not been for NDEA, might not have been able to complete their college studies.¹⁷

Title III

This title was originally to strengthen elementary and secondary school instruction in science, mathematics, and foreign languages.

¹⁷Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Congressional Quarterly, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1970.

It has been significantly broadened. In 1965 it was expanded to include support for history, civics, geography, economics, English and reading (on the basis of 50-50 matching grants to public schools and loans to private schools). Later Title III was amended to include all school subjects. Originally, there were appropriations in this title for the development of supervisory capabilities. These appropriations were merged with those of Title V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to strengthen State education leadership.¹⁸

In 1970 Title III(a) of the NDEA, and Section 12 of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities were combined.¹⁹

Title IV

The graduate fellowships provided under this title helped relieve the shortage of college teachers. The number of fellowships was greatly increased in 1968.²⁰

Title V

Guidance, counseling, and testing to encourage outstanding high school students to continue into college was the original emphasis of this title. Now it seeks to improve counseling for all high school students. Under a 1966 amendment, elementary and junior high school students benefit from the extension of eligibility for counselor

¹⁸Cohen, Wilbur J., "NDEA: An Idea That Grew," American Education, Volume 4, Number 4, September 1968, p.3.

¹⁹Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Congressional Quarterly, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1970.

²⁰"A Summary of the Revised NDEA," Social Education, National Council for the Social Studies, Volume XXVIII, Number 7, November 1964, p. 415.

institutes to elementary school, junior college, and technical institute personnel. This merged with other programs administered by the U.S. Office of Education under the Education Professions Development Act of 1967. This, in effect, broadened the benefits to education.

Title VI

Title VI was to strengthen the development of language education in schools. The amendments of 1966 authorize federal support for the establishment and operation of university and college centers for the study of foreign language and areas relating to them, such as the history, political science, economics, sociology and geography of the area. Title VI was also amended to permit federal aid to centers teaching Western European languages which were previously excluded, and to permit federal support in full for these center (previously 50%).²¹

Title VII

Funding for research into and demonstration of communications media for instructional use was provided under Title VII. The 1968 appropriations for this title merged with the Cooperative Research Act.²²

Title VIII

The training of manpower in highly skilled technical courses of scientific importance went out of existence in 1963 with the passage of

²¹Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Congressional Quarterly, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1966.

²²Cohen, Wilbur J., "NDEA: An Idea That Grew," American Education, Volume 4, Number 4, September 1968, p. 3.

the Vocational Education Act. The program is now Title III of the George-Barden Act of 1946. This program has been broadened to strengthen support for scientific and technical training and re-training for high school students and for adults.

Title IX

The Science Information Service still supports science dissemination and research into improved communication techniques.

Title X

Statistical services of State departments of education have been funded by this title. In 1968 appropriations for NDEA Title X and Title V of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act were merged.

Title XI

Title XI was created in 1964, by amendment to the NDEA. The program which formed the base of Title XI was started under Title VI, NDEA, which had been broadened in 1963 to include teachers of English as a second language. Title XI provided an expanded program of grants to colleges and universities to operate teacher training institutes for elementary and secondary school teachers. In its first year the new title included eight subject matter areas. They were modern foreign language, English as a second language, English, reading, history, geography, educational media, and the special needs of disadvantaged youth. In 1966 industrial arts, economics, and international affairs were added. The broadened program of the Education Professions Development Act of 1967 incorporated Title XI.²³

²³Ibid.

VI.

NDEA: SUMMARY

There has always been disagreement in the United States about the rights and responsibilities of the federal government toward education. It wasn't until mid-way through this century we began to explore and understand the potential the federal government has for influencing education. The year 1958 most certainly marked a turning point in the relationship between education and the federal government. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 has been the mold of current legislation that has influenced education in our country. The NDEA proved that local, state and federal agencies can cooperate in education.

Prior to NDEA the federal government had made contributions to the support of education, land was provided as early as 1785. Vocational education has received substantial support since 1917. But this was a relatively small involvement compared to today. NDEA has been a trail blazer. Today, more than ever before the federal government supports education-not only in vocational education but in all facets. And in part, at least, the NDEA is to thank (or blame) for this.

VII.

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